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SUBJECT: KENYA DROUGHT UPDATE - September 2006

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SUMMARY

1. Kenya's long rains (March-June) food security interagency assessment has been completed. The overall assessment process and methodology was coordinated and backstopped by the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG) comprising of representatives of GOK, NGO and UN agencies.

2. The assessment reveals modest improvements in food security in some marginal agricultural areas in the southeast and coastal districts as well as in parts of pastoral districts. However, productivity of livestock is low in pastoral areas, after normal reproductive patterns were disrupted by the devastating consecutive years of drought. The assessment confirms that a sizeable proportion of pastoralists lost substantial herds and are now destitute, camped close to local centers. Hence, food security in most pastoral areas remains precarious and pastoralists' food security is sustained, for the most part, by significant levels of food aid. Modest harvests in the marginal agricultural areas suggest that current improvements are temporary and food security will remain an issue until the next key harvest beginning in March 2007.

3. The Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG) recommends that approximately 2.95 million persons in 25 Arid and Semi-Arid Areas (ASALs) continue to receive food aid until their status improves following the next short-rains harvest. This caseload includes approximately 554,000 children that are targeted under school feeding programs in the drought affected districts. According to the World Food Program, approximately 180,679 MT of food is required to address immediate relief needs of the 2.95 million persons through February 2007. It is anticipated that the GOK will request donors and humanitarian groups to continue

providing key humanitarian assistance to drought affected Kenyans following the issuance of the long-rains assessment report to be officially released on September 14, 2006. End summary.

The food security assessment framework

¶4. An interagency and multi-sectoral food security assessment, organized by the Kenya Food Security Group (KFSSG) has completed the fieldwork and data analysis and is expected to issue its final report on September 14, 2006.

¶5. The assessment methodology was based on a livelihoods approach to understanding vulnerability, and used an adapted version (for rapid assessment) of the household food economy method for the field data collection. The assessment covered 25 districts from August 10-31, 2006. It included quantitative data collection at the household, market and community level and more in-depth discussions with the District Steering Groups (DSGs). As appropriate, the assessment teams held separate meetings with lead NGOs dealing with food security that have representation in the District, local district experts, local community based organizations, etc.

¶6. Based on the assessment, approximately 2.95 million persons in Kenya will require various short to medium term relief assistance through the next short rains harvest in March 2007. The relief requirement includes an estimated 180,679 MT of food and over US\$8 million worth of non-food assistance in health and nutrition, water and sanitation, and emergency agricultural and livestock interventions.

Food security and agro-climatic conditions

¶7. According to FEWS/NET, Kenya experiences mild cyclical drought events approximately every 3-5 years with more severe dry periods roughly in ten-year cycles. Since 1998, successive poor rainy seasons have limited the ability of poor households in parts of the ASAL (Arid and Semi-Arid Lands) to recover lost assets and employ traditional coping mechanisms. In addition to lack of rains, limited purchasing power, political marginalization (in the pastoralist context) and limited livelihood options are exacerbating the drought in Kenya.

¶8. The 2006 long-rains were erratic, characterized by an early start and early cessation in drought-affected areas, compounded by uneven spatial and temporal distribution. Although the 2006 long rains ended in June in most of Kenya, the western half of the country as well as the southern coastal areas experienced unseasonable showers during late July and early August. The rains had little impact on crops outside western Kenya, as most of the crop has been harvested. However, the showers have benefited pasture and browse in northwestern pastoral districts, after an unusually early cessation of the long rains in May. Little or no rains occurred in the eastern and northeastern pastoral districts save in localized areas.

¶9. The Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP) has reported that localized areas in the northwestern pastoral districts have received reprieve from the dry conditions, after unseasonable showers in Marsabit, Baringo, Moyale, Samburu, West Pokot and Turkana districts towards the end of July and early August. In most other pastoral districts, pasture, browse and water are steadily declining. This situation is not expected to improve before the next short-rains season (October - December, 2006). Therefore, watering and grazing distances are increasing dramatically as livestock migrate to dry season grazing areas. Water trucking has re-started in localized areas such as in southern Wajir

and northern Mandera due to the depletion of key surface water sources. Water quality is problematic and contamination by carcasses in parts of Mandera District and high salinity in Garissa has limited the use of some key water sources. An upsurge in disease and incidence of conflict mainly over scarce resources has further complicated the dire food insecurity situation in the drought affected pastoral and agro-pastoral areas.

¶10. The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has revised the total estimated national maize output for 2006 down to 2.52 million MT from the original estimate of 2.9 million MT. The revision was necessitated by an extended dry spell in southern and coastal districts and the Rift Valley lowlands that lasted nearly one month and extended up to the harvest time. Yet, the revised estimate represents a 15 percent increase over the average long-rains national maize output.

Emergency Operation (EMOP) status

¶11. The Kenya Emergency Operation (EMOP) is scheduled to continue through February 2007. An estimated 2.95 million beneficiaries in 25 predominantly pastoral, agro pastoral and marginal agricultural districts will be targeted for emergency food distribution. According to the World Food Program approximately 180,679 MT of foods is required to address immediate relief needs of 2.95 million persons through February 2007. Existing pipeline will not go beyond end of October. Currently, the total shortfall is about 75,524 MT of which 87 percent is in cereals. Latest USG contribution of 2,500 MT in assorted commodities is not expected until December.

¶12. More recent non-USG contributions include US\$500,000 from African Development Bank, US\$100,000, from the GOK and an unconfirmed contribution of Euro 500,000 from Spain.

Conclusion and recommendation

¶13. As per the long-rains assessment, the relatively modest 2006 long-rains in marginal agricultural areas have resulted in immediate relief after intense drought conditions that intensified during the first quarter of 2005 through March 2006. However, due to successive years of inadequate rains, livelihoods of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, in particular, have deteriorated markedly and recovery has been ominously slow. The slow recovery, rising conflict and fragile nutritional status underline the poor prospects that the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities face in the short to medium term. The marginal crop producers also remain highly food insecure after a mediocre season followed up on the heels of a failed season. While the long-rains season is not the primary season in marginal agricultural areas, it often forms a critical bridge to the more significant short-rains season (October-December).

¶14. The food crisis in Kenya's Arid and Semi Arid pastoral and marginal agricultural areas is clearly much deeper than emergency. It is rather a fundamentally chronic poverty problem, necessitating strategies to address the root causes of food insecurity. This calls for more dialogue and policy actions by the GOK that promote targeted investment in the areas in order to reduce levels of poverty and extreme vulnerability. Notwithstanding the climate variations and the ensuing unreliability of rains, the areas are endowed with diverse resources that, if managed creatively, could significantly improve the livelihoods of the communities at risk.

¶15. USAID/Kenya will continue to play an active role in

the dialogue around understanding the factors underlying repeated food crisis in various parts of the country to find new approaches to protect poor people from short-term shocks and reduce their food insecurity in the medium term. This discussion will contribute to joint GOK donor commitment to tackling chronic food insecurity in a more appropriate manner.

¶16. Meantime, given the likelihood of an emergency food pipeline break beyond October 2006, the USG should sustain its relief assistance to meet urgent food and non-food needs of millions of people expected to suffer from the protracted drought. RANNEBERGER